

KEY NOTES

PROGRAMMING IDEAS FOR EMPLOYEE RECREATION AND SERVICES

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LEISURE SPENDING INCREASES IN SPITE OF RECESSION

Leisure dollars spent in the U.S.A. are on the increase. Employees are not cutting back to any great degree on their recreational spending. The gasoline shortage and pricing are having a negative effect on automobile travel. Overall, however, Americans are willing to devote more money than ever before to their own entertainment at home and in their communities. We see an overcrowding of public recreation facilities, especially in urban areas, at the same time that public funds for recreation services are shrinking. Employer-sponsored recreation, offered at a relatively low cost, will take a more important role in the immediate future in answering the leisure demands of our employees and their families.

DON'T LET SMALL COMPANY SIZE STOP YOU

Some employers have so few employees that it is difficult for them to organize athletic teams and leagues. This should not discourage them from sponsoring a company/family group that meets frequently at luncheon, dinner, or breakfast get-togethers. Such informal gatherings offer management an opportunity to socialize with employees in a relaxed atmosphere. If a small company is a member of an Industrial Recreation Council, other small businesses in the Council can be contacted to form a mutual recreation program, including team sport activities. Other types of programs can be adapted successfully for both small businesses and councils. These options include theatre parties, golf days, family outings, picnics, hayrides, card parties and more. Employee services can be offered regardless of the number of employees, especially when the company belongs to an IRC and thereby becomes eligible for discounted amusement tickets, merchandise, long and short tours, hotel rooms, restaurant meals, etc. Any small employer can offer a long list of employee services, at little cost. Call NIRA for more ideas.

EASY, OPEN LEADERSHIP

Many organizations, including recreation committees and boards, can become so structured and formal that people hesitate to take part. More is accomplished when the group has few obstacles that discourage discussion, suggestions, and objections. The manner in which leadership is exercised makes a tremendous difference in the attitudes of those participating or serving. Recognition is a key factor in all successful group activities. The genuine personal concern for volunteers and participants that encourages participation is the hallmark of a good chairperson. What is

most desirable is an informal easy-going family atmosphere among leaders and officers. Of course, some controls are necessary to insure that a project runs smoothly. A series of leadership training sessions for staff members and volunteers can help encourage both professionalism and comradeship. This can be done by holding new officer institutes, new leader orientations, classes in group organization and new member orientations. Instructors should follow-up by issuing officer and committee persons guidebooks and reviews of methods and procedures. All of these learning experiences can be interesting and fun for the participant. Work with your company's training department on developing your program.

THE NAMES GAME

The chief aim of social events is to get people acquainted and help them have a good time together. There are many ways to make the preliminary introductions relaxing and simple. First, each participant should have a name tag with large print, with the first name in letters at least one-half inch high and the last name half that height. Avoid typing name tags unless your machine can produce type this large. It is better to let each person print his or her own tag if a committee cannot spend the time hand lettering. Plan mixers such as name bingo, match the numbers on name tags, autograph contests, name recall contests, name associations, guess-who contests, and team sports for people with the same first names. For new people at a party, offer a "Did you know" introduction; i.e. "she was a nurse at _____ when _____ where _____. Her hobbies are _____, and she was born in _____. Even when the group becomes better acquainted, continue to use name tags, if only with first names, just in case someone forgets. Pressure-sensitive tags should be tested beforehand as some will not adhere to synthetic fabrics. Tags should be worn on the left side of a dress or coat, not the right, unless the person is lefthanded. String tags should be printed on both sides. Large pin tags should not be used because they leave holes in garments.

DANCES--SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

Dance activities must be planned with the ages of participants in mind. What attracts the younger employees often will discourage the older group. Because dancing is a socializing event more time is usually spent socializing than actually dancing. It is always wise to provide refreshments or dinner, or to supplement the dance with a short floor show or additional observation entertainment. Famous-name bands may be an attraction for public events, but this is not always the case with industrial groups. Sometimes, recorded music or a small professional combo will suffice. Low attendance at a dance may be the result of poor age appeal, lack of refreshments, poor planning or promotion. Contests, prizes, and ticket selling incentives help in promotion. Careful and experienced attention to generational preferences will leave your dancers cheering for more.

RETIRED EXECUTIVE AND SUPERVISORS

The Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) is seeking volunteers from the ranks of retired professional people to serve as advisors and consultants to small businesses and manufacturers. Many retired people, especially former administrators and

supervisors, want to keep productive in retirement, even if there is little or no pay involved. You owe it to your retiree club and your employees who are approaching retirement to investigate SCORE. Contact your local Small Business Administration office or write Small Business (SCORE-ACE), 1441 L Street North, West Washington, D.C. 20416.

OPEN YOUR OWN EXHIBIT

Exhibitions that display merchandise, offer simple instructions, answer questions, and offer demonstrations have always attracted large audiences. Home, boat, automobile, sports, fashion, flower and garden shows are held in many cities. Employee organizations can easily program similar exhibits for their members' families and friends. Shows of this type allow space and time for employee hobby displays, employee entertainment, auctions, and even company product sales. Community groups such as Junior Achievement, art leagues, the Heart Association, and the Red Cross can also contribute interesting, educational displays.

"INSIDE STORY" EVENINGS

This is another activity that serves many purposes and attracts a large number of employees. All employees are invited to purchase dinner tickets for themselves and/or their spouses to attend the "Inside Story" on company property or in a reserved hotel dining room. Each department or division chief conducts one dinner meeting, telling what his/her area does, who is involved and what future plans are being made. Visuals, exhibits, and employee volunteers take part in the program. Managers have major speaking roles while the president or a division manager acts as master of ceremonies. Whenever possible, a question and answer period is included. The event may be held in conjunction with a plant/office tour. It should offer ample opportunity not only for education, but also for socializing with top management.

EMPLOYEE OPEN HOUSE

Tours of homes, especially historic sites, or old homes that employees have restored to their original appearances, are excellent fall or spring activities. In spring, include a private garden tour and, wherever possible, an onsite refreshment offer. The employee association may choose to raise extra funds by charging a small admission fee. Some employees are collectors of antiques, bottles, art, etc. and are eager to invite their fellow workers to see their treasures. Half of the enjoyment of having an attractive home, garden, or collection is providing the opportunity for others to see it. When the employee association creates the opportunity and the plant newspaper publicizes it, both visitors and hosts enjoy the event.

ROLLER SKATING ON THE UPSWING

Roller skating is becoming an excellent family activity. It has increased dramatically in popularity recently and appears to be an escalating interest. More in-

door skating rinks are being built and many recreational sites are now providing outdoor roller skating areas. Roller skating, like swimming, is an activity almost everyone tried in childhood. It is an activity that can provide good physical exercise for adults as well as children. Before you encourage skating on your company's property, however, invite a local sporting goods retailer to conduct a roller skating safety clinic for employee families and to sell skates and pads at a significant discount to participants.

KIDDIE PIX CONTEST

Your employees will enjoy entering the photo contest whose subjects must be children. Such photos, especially of our own children, are fun to take and great fun to show. If you have an employee photo club, let it arrange and judge the event. Winning photos can be featured in the company newspaper and be used on program covers and promotional pieces for other activities. They might also be entered in the NIRA Photo Contest and other local and national photography contests.

NEVER A FREE TICKET

When planning events, avoid giving free passes or tickets, except to company and community news media. Volunteer leaders may be given discounts of 50%, but never freebies. Once the policy of "everyone pays" becomes known, it does not decrease interest or discourage committee workers. On the contrary, it sets a higher regard for the event and assures more sales.

COOPERATION BY EXAMPLE

To create cooperation, someone must introduce it by example. There is no better way to get a cooperative, friendly team atmosphere than by forming an employee/employer recreational and service club. It is something all companies and businesses can develop whether they have a dozen employees or 5,000. The employees' opportunity to share the responsibilities of group management in a recreational club has a spillover effect of cooperative attitudes on the job. Employees' knowing one another as friends and sharing responsibilities as leaders are important steps toward greater productivity.

SOMEONE WHO SHOULD KNOW ABOUT NIRA

You know what NIRA membership has done for you. Why not let a colleague in on a good thing? Help NIRA spread the word by telling us about a recreation director, volunteer or professional, who could benefit from NIRA membership. We will send your friend a complete package of information, including free copies of "Key Notes" and RECREATION MANAGEMENT Magazine. All you have to do is fill out the brief form enclosed and return it to NIRA Headquarters. Do it now.

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HARRIS POLL SAYS FOOD IS TOPS

According to a survey by pollster Louis Harris, the top leisure-time activity of Americans is eating. We have indicated that eating, observation, simple movement and a chance to win are the four common denominators of recreation. Among the Harris poll respondents, 54% reported eating as relaxation; 41% mentioned watching television; 21% spend much of their leisure time in outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing and boating; 19% participate in sports such as golf, tennis, or the more strenuous physical activities; 17% say they spend their spare time trying to earn extra money; while some 25% spend time with social activities such as dancing, attending parties and playing cards. Those who spend their leisure time with hobbies such as photography, woodworking, etc. average another 20%, about 15% go for travel and a change of scenery. Among successful employee programs, we have noted more picnics, cookouts, luncheons and banquets than any other type activity.

FAMILY-JOB MARRIAGE

In any friendly conversation, most people will bring up their families or their job interests. Programs involving either one of employees' prevailing interests should attract great participation. Programs and events that cater to the employees' families usually receive greater support from management and have a higher percentage of participation from the work force than those planned for employees only. Open houses and plant visits tap both interests. Family social events marry the two most important elements of employees' lives. For this reason, they can be very effective in reenforcing employee involvement with the company.

TOO MANY ACTIVITIES?

Can an industrial recreation program have too many activities? The answer is, "Yes", if the activities offered are redundant. However, when a program is diversified, there seems to be no limit to the number of activities that can be sustained. The director must not judge an activity solely on the number of participants it draws, but also on its specialized part in the total program. Everyone does not read the sports page or the editorial section of a newspaper. Good newspapers, however, offer many sections pertaining to different interests. The principle of offering activities is much the same. So long as you can afford them, continue to offer and carry activities for minorities as well as the majority.

INTRODUCTORY SPECIALS--ANOTHER EMPLOYEE SERVICE

New establishments such as restaurants, theatres, stores and sports facilities may find the employee services area an excellent promotional opportunity. Special introductory offers in the form of discounted specials can be arranged for one-time events or limited use. Employee services administrators who are willing to publicize offers and distribute invitations could take credit for exclusive savings and novel opportunities extended to employees. Promoters have the advantage of reaching your employees with special bargains that offer "you found it first" status. Such promotions cost far less than other forms of advertising and can be a real service to employees, as long as the recreation department verifies the true value of the offer.

EDUCATION AS RECREATION

Learning is considered by many as a form of intellectual recreation. There are ways in which it can pay off in individual improvement and professional advancement. Sessions involving the following topics can be both interesting and educational:

- How to dress for success
- How to write business letters
- How to converse easily
- How to chair a committee
- The art of follow-up
- How and when to delegate
- How to obtain volunteer help
- How to recognize others for job performed
- How to promote an activity or project
- How to improve your public speaking
- How to overcome a feeling of inferiority

Some of these topics can be covered by company officials and others by speakers from centers of higher education. Start your self-improvement class program with a few universally popular topics and build it with the addition of topics by participant request.

OPEN-UP MIXER

Next time you want to encourage participation, call upon a number of people in your group to answer these questions, "What did you do when you were a kid?", "What did you do on your honeymoon?", "What was your greatest embarrassment?", "What job have you hated most?", "What slip of the tongue did you make that created a problem for you?", "Why did you choose your job or profession?", etc. People will be surprisingly willing to open up when the occasion is programmed. The exercise is fun and revealing within a secure and friendly atmosphere. Few techniques work as well at breaking the ice and opening the door to continuing friendships among your members.

HOW-TO INVESTMENT CLASSES

There is a growing interest among younger employees in investments that will help protect their earnings against the erosion of inflation. Few employees are aware of the various types of investments possible but increasing numbers of them are learning that simple savings accounts will no longer provide security. A series of investment discussions covering real estate, stocks, debentures, bonds, saving certificates and business ventures, could intrigue many curious employees. The advantages and the disadvantages of each investment program should be discussed. Also, the array of rip-off schemes that are pushed upon the uninformed public should be explained, making the sessions even more interesting, attractive and informative. Contact investment experts, in-house and in the community, for assistance.

CHILDREN'S FASHION SHOW

A children's fashion show can be a most enjoyable activity and can provide an opportunity for employee family participation. Almost any children's apparel store would welcome the opportunity to help program such an event. Plan to open one for the spring holidays or the back-to-school season. Enlist the children of employees as models and watch the proud parents turn out.

SOCIAL SECURITY CREDIT CHECK-UP

Social Security mail-back card forms enable employees to verify their creditable earnings to date. Benefits under the Federal Social Security Act are paid on the basis of the employee's record of earnings. It is advisable to make periodic checks with the Administration's records because it becomes extremely difficult to correct errors beyond three years. Employees may request verification of total wages credited to their Social Security accounts via the SSA-7004 form. When they receive their statements of earnings from the Social Security Administration, they can check the government's figures against their own records. Should an error be found, they should bring it to the attention of the local Social Security office for correction. Contact your local Social Security office for a supply of the SSA-7004 cards. Obtain a clear explanation of their use and the meaning of the information they elicit before you distribute them.

LIFETIME HOBBIES CAN PAY OFF

Woodcarving Workshop - One of the most fascinating and useful hobbies you can introduce in your activities program is woodcarving. Start with simple soft woodcarving under the guidance of a good instructor. This hobby training may tap hidden talents that offer lifetime enjoyment, and even profit, to employees.

Antiques - Values, Restoration and Preservation - Here is another popular subject, offering opportunities for amateur collectors and investors. Some antique dealers and experienced collectors may be interested in offering a series of workshops for your employees. Little or no special facilities are required to program these educational benefits. Tours of antique shops can be scheduled for the group and comparison values can be discussed.

Hand Lettering and Manuscript Painting - Here is a hobby that will soon develop into an extra income source. Lettering award certificates, diplomas or membership certificates can be interesting and profitable. Designing certificates and plaques will provide many hours of enjoyable recreation. Commercial art instructors and free-lance practitioners may be contacted to teach classes in various lettering techniques and styles.

Oil and Water Color Paintings - Art classes introduced in the program will attract employees and their families. Here remarkable progress can develop in a short period of time under the care of a talented instructor. Many employees who apply basic talent and interest to this fascinating hobby soon find they have a clamoring market for their paintings.

Fix-It Clinics - This is especially interesting to people who are not knowledgeable in simple mechanics. Find instructors, perhaps even in your own maintenance department, who can explain how to repair a leaking faucet, replace an electric switch, install a door lock, make windows burglar-proof, repair and restore broken china, glaze a window, frame pictures or maintain common household appliances. Your instructors should describe the best tools to use for each job and note which paints or adhesives to use.

NATURAL DISASTER SAFETY PROGRAMS

Spring and early summer usher in the tornado season. Many employees are not aware of the proper precautions to take. There are storm alert alarm devices available that every homeowner can obtain at the cost of a smoke alarm. There are government brochures available from the Superintendent of Documents in Washington, D.C. giving information concerning weather emergencies. The American Red Cross also has information available. These topics provide an excellent opportunity for meetings involving community agencies such as Civil Defense, fire and police departments, the weather bureau, the Red Cross and the Coast Guard. Check with these agencies regularly to determine a schedule of helpful information campaigns for your location.

OLD FASHIONED SOCIAL GATHERINGS MAY BE REVIVED

Travel will become increasingly expensive and fuel more difficult to obtain in coming years. We all should be looking for close-to-home entertainment. Some past generations' entertainment may be dusted off for a review. Stage a contest for energy-saving recreation program ideas that could be offered. Ask older folks about the social events they planned as young adults. You just may find these ideas will generate considerable interest, now that the energy crises has forced a cut-back to simpler ways of entertainment.

Someone Who Should Know About NIRA

REMEMBER TO FILL OUT AND RETURN ENCLOSED REFERRAL